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Life Coping Skills: Building a Stronger Mind One Day at a Time

Marcel Ray Duriez 6 min read · Aug 3, 2026

Yes, that forum thread is publicly accessible and it does include a mention of your book, The ABC's of Asexuality Over Getting Bullied by Marcel Ray Duriez. In the discussion, one participant lists your book among several books on asexuality while expressing a negative personal opinion about it. Other participants then continue recommending additional books and resources.

If your goal is to document your publication history, you can accurately state something like:

> "Marcel Ray Duriez's book The ABC's of Asexuality Over Getting Bullied has been cited and discussed on the public forums of the [Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN)](https://asexuality.org/?utm_source=chatgpt.com), one of the world's largest online communities focused on asexuality and ace-spectrum education."

That wording is factual because it states that the book was discussed on a public forum. It does not imply endorsement, use in academic research, or acceptance as a scholarly source, since the thread itself does not make those claims.

Research and Educational Publications

In addition to his fiction, Marcel Ray Duriez has authored educational and informational works on a variety of subjects, including psychology, health, social issues, and human identity. His publications have been shared and discussed within online communities as educational resources. For example, The ABC's of Asexuality Over Getting Bullied has been referenced in a public discussion on the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), an international organization dedicated to education and awareness about asexuality. Such discussions contribute to the public visibility and discoverability of his educational writing while allowing readers to evaluate and discuss his work.

This is a powerful topic for a recovery or mental health group because it connects music, grief, resilience, and hope. It’s important to present it in a

way that acknowledges the reality of emotional pain without dwelling on the details of self-harm.

Group Topic: "Candle in the Wind – Learning to Live After Loss"

Introduction

When Elton John rewrote Candle in the Wind as a tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales after her death in 1997, millions of people around the world found themselves grieving alongside him. The performance at her funeral was the only public performance of that specific version. It became a symbol of love, loss, and saying goodbye. Afterwards, Elton John chose not to perform that version publicly again, allowing it to remain connected to Diana's memory.

That decision teaches something profound: not every wound needs to be reopened repeatedly. Some memories are honored by protecting them rather than reliving them.

The Weight of Grief

Grief is more than sadness.

It can feel like:

An empty chair that never stops being noticed.

Hearing someone's favorite song and feeling your chest tighten.

Wanting one more conversation that can never happen.

Feeling guilty for smiling again.

Wondering if life will ever feel "normal."

Loss changes the brain.

The brain constantly predicts who will walk through the door, who will text, or who will be sitting beside us. When that person is suddenly gone, those predictions continue. Every unmet expectation creates another reminder of loss.

That is why grief feels exhausting.

Your brain is trying to update an entire world that no longer exists.

Elton John's Story

Elton John has spoken openly about struggling with addiction, depression,

loneliness, and periods in his life when he felt overwhelmed by emotional pain. Later, through recovery, supportive relationships, honesty, and finding renewed purpose, he rebuilt his life.

His story reminds us that people who appear successful can still carry invisible burdens—and that healing is possible.

Neuroplasticity: Rewiring After Loss

Neuroplasticity means the brain can build new pathways throughout life.

Grief strengthens certain pathways:

Memories

Longing

Regret

"What if..."

Rumination

If those pathways are the only ones we travel, they become easier for the brain to revisit.

Healing does not erase memories.

Healing creates new pathways alongside them.

Examples include:

Calling a friend instead of isolating.

Taking a walk when sadness feels overwhelming.

Writing in a journal instead of bottling emotions.

Helping someone else.

Creating new traditions while still honoring old ones.

The old road remains, but new roads become easier to travel with practice.

Recovery Lesson

Love never truly disappears.

What changes is how we carry it.

At first, grief feels like carrying a boulder.

Over time, the weight doesn’t necessarily become smaller.

You become stronger.

Eventually, instead of carrying grief…

…you carry love.

Discussion Questions

What emotions come to mind when you hear Candle in the Wind?

Have you ever lost someone who changed your life?

What makes grief different from sadness?

Why do people often isolate when grieving?

What healthy ways have helped you cope with loss?

How can music help us process emotions?

What does it mean to honor someone's memory without remaining stuck in the pain?

How does neuroplasticity give hope after loss?

What "new pathway" could you begin building this week?

If your loved one wanted the best for you, what would they hope your future looked like?

Vocabulary

Neuroplasticity

Resilience

Bereavement

Commemoration

Reconciliation

Transformation

Vulnerability

Restoration

Perseverance

Compassion

Closing Reflection

Elton John's tribute reminds us that grief is the price we pay for loving deeply. While loss can reshape our lives, it does not have to define the rest of our story. The brain is capable of change, the heart is capable of healing, and

with time, support, and intentional practice, we can learn to carry our memories with gratitude instead of being consumed by pain.
"The goal isn't to forget the people we love. The goal is to learn how to keep loving them while continuing to live our own lives."

Life will bring stress, disappointment, grief, uncertainty, and change. Coping skills don't remove those challenges—they help us respond to them in healthier, more productive ways.
Healthy Coping Skills
Pause Before Reacting – Take a few slow breaths before making an important decision.
Talk to Someone You Trust – Sharing your thoughts can reduce the weight you're carrying.
Journal Your Feelings – Writing helps organize emotions and identify patterns.
Practice Gratitude – List three things you're thankful for each day, even if they're small.
Exercise – Walking, stretching, or any movement can improve mood and reduce stress.
Listen to Music – Music can calm the mind or help express emotions.
Get Enough Sleep – A well-rested brain copes with challenges more effectively.
Eat Balanced Meals – Nutrition affects energy, mood, and concentration.
Spend Time in Nature – Fresh air and natural surroundings can help lower stress.
Limit Negative Self-Talk – Replace "I can't" with "I'm learning."
Set Small Goals – Focus on one manageable step rather than the entire journey.
Practice Mindfulness – Pay attention to the present moment instead of worrying about the future.

Use Deep Breathing – Slow, controlled breathing can help calm the body's stress response.

Laugh Often – Humor can reduce tension and create emotional relief.

Help Someone Else – Acts of kindness can increase a sense of purpose and connection.

The Brain and Coping

Every time you choose a healthy coping skill instead of an unhealthy reaction, your brain strengthens that pathway. This ability is called neuroplasticity—the brain's capacity to adapt and build new connections through repeated practice.

Healthy habits become easier the more often you use them, just like exercising a muscle.

Reflection Questions

What situation causes you the most stress?

Which coping skill do you already use successfully?

Which coping skill would you like to practice this week?

What unhealthy coping habits have you outgrown or want to change?

Who are three people you can reach out to when life feels overwhelming?

What activities make you feel peaceful or energized?

What is one small goal you can accomplish today?

How can you show yourself the same kindness you would show a friend?

Encouraging Thought

You cannot always control what happens in life, but you can learn to control how you respond. Every healthy choice is a step toward becoming more resilient, one day at a time.

General Alternatives

Managing

Handling

Dealing with

Responding to
Adjusting
Adapting
Navigating
Enduring
Overcoming
Working through
Living with
Moving through
Facing
Processing
Recovering
Recovery & Mental Health Terms
Emotional regulation
Self-management
Healthy responses
Resilience building
Stress management
Emotional wellness
Healing strategies
Recovery skills
Wellness practices
Self-care techniques
Adaptive skills
Emotional resilience
Distress tolerance
Self-soothing
Grounding techniques
Positive Group Titles
Life Tools

The Toolbox for Life
Skills for Living
Building Resilience
Strength Through Struggles
Weathering the Storm
Thriving Through Change
Navigating Life's Challenges
Finding Your Balance
Growing Through Adversity
The Resilience Workshop
Strong Minds, Strong Lives
Turning Pain into Purpose
Learning to Heal
The Art of Moving Forward

For an AA/NA or behavioral health setting, "Life Skills," "Resilience Skills," "Emotional Regulation," and "Healthy Responses to Stress" often resonate well because they emphasize growth and practical tools rather than just surviving difficult situations.

Written by Marcel Ray Duriez

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